

## Prof. Ilja Braveny 1940–2007

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On 2 February 2007, Ilja Braveny, Professor of Clinical Microbiology and Editor-in-Chief of the *European Journal of Clinical Microbiology & Infectious Diseases* (EJCMID), died unexpectedly. His death is a great loss, not only for his family and friends, but for all who work in the field of microbiology.

Personally, I have known Ilja since 1981. We met briefly during the First International Symposium on Infections in the Immunocompromised Host in Veldhoven in 1981. After one fortuitous telephone conversation in the autumn of that same year, we became much better acquainted. In that phone call, Ilja told me he had launched a medical journal, the *European Journal of Clinical Microbiology*. This was at a time when no comparable forum outside of the USA existed, and Ilja wanted to address that deficit. He firmly believed in the competency of European medical microbiologists and felt they should have their own voice in a journal and in microbiology-related meetings. Further to founding the journal, he asked me to join a group of European

microbiologists to discuss the possibility of organizing a European microbiological society. He had ambition. He wanted to put European microbiology on the map.

Ilja's vision was to start the European Society of Clinical Microbiology (ESCM), an organization that could host microbiologists from around the world at meetings similar to the well-attended International Conference on Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy and those organized by the American Society for Microbiology. With this goal in mind, he invited a group of well-respected European microbiologists (including Bjorn Hoffstedt, Jacques Acar, David Williams, Otto Zak, Arturo Visconti, and Evilio Perea, among others) to come together in the Bavarian Alps. There, Ilja's ideas for holding European meetings and forming a European society were discussed. His vision was clear: We European microbiologists should organize ourselves in a society. And that is what we did.

There, in one old Bavarian tavern, the ESCM (Ilja's brainchild) was born. He was such a good host and organizer that Munich, where he worked, remained the seat of the ESCM and the place where we met regularly in the 1980s. It was also in Munich that he later suggested the society should additionally serve as a platform for infectious diseases specialists. Thus, it became the European Society for Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID).

Meanwhile, Ilja devoted many hours to developing his journal, now known as the *European Journal of Clinical Microbiology & Infectious Diseases* (EJCMID). This important European forum has become firmly established as a valuable vehicle for science in the field of microbiology. Ilja Braveny was an excellent editor, with sound judgment and a fair disposition. He was also a highly competent scientist. As such, he recognized the value of meeting with other scientists to collaborate and to exchange ideas. As a further testament to his belief in international collaboration, he sent many of his assistants and junior scientists abroad for training.

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Ilja Braveny was a personal friend, a gracious host, and an amiable and warm-hearted person. He was a pioneer with exceptional foresight and extraordinary ideas matched by the necessary drive to implement them. He was also a good sportsman, a terrific skier. I have fond memories of our skiing trips to Austria and Italy, where we discussed the

future of European microbiology. His passing has occurred much too early. He is dearly missed and will always be remembered and admired for his significant contributions to fostering science in microbiology.

May he rest in peace.